

Assembly Bill No. 1680

CHAPTER 473

An act to amend Sections 1300, 1301, 1302, 1304, and 1309 of the Corporations Code, relating to dissenting shareholders' rights.

[Approved by Governor September 23, 2012. Filed with
Secretary of State September 23, 2012.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1680, Wieckowski. Dissenting shareholders' rights.

Existing law, the General Corporation Law, provides for the formation and governance of general corporations, including the rights of shareholders of a corporation who dissent from approving a reorganization or short-form merger. Existing law provides that a holder of dissenting shares, as defined, who complies with certain procedures under specified circumstances is entitled to receive from the corporation the fair market value of the holder's shares, as defined, determined as of the day before the first announcement of the terms of the transaction. Existing law provides that holders of publicly traded shares are only eligible to receive the fair market value of their shares if demands for payment are filed with respect to 5% or more of the class of shares. Existing law requires that a corporation give specified notice to shareholders of a subsidiary corporation regarding a merger of the subsidiary corporation if all of the corporate shares of the subsidiary corporation are not owned by the parent corporation.

This bill would provide that the fair market value of dissenting shares shall be determined as of the day of, and immediately prior to, the first announcement of the terms of the proposed transaction, subject to adjustment as specified. The bill would eliminate the provision making holders of publicly traded shares only eligible to receive the fair market value of their dissenting shares if 5% or more of the shares are dissenting shares. The bill would make conforming changes.

The bill would require a dissenting shareholder who demands that the corporation purchase his or her shares to include a statement of what the shareholder claims is the fair market value of those shares and that statement would constitute an offer by the shareholder to sell the shares at that price.

Existing law defines "dissenting shares" for purposes of these provisions to exclude publicly traded shares, except as specified.

This bill would modify the definition of "dissenting shares" to include publicly traded shares for which the holder is entitled to anything except publicly traded shares of another corporation or cash in lieu of fractional shares, or a combination of those shares and that cash.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 1300 of the Corporations Code is amended to read:

1300. (a) If the approval of the outstanding shares (Section 152) of a corporation is required for a reorganization under subdivisions (a) and (b) or subdivision (e) or (f) of Section 1201, each shareholder of the corporation entitled to vote on the transaction and each shareholder of a subsidiary corporation in a short-form merger may, by complying with this chapter, require the corporation in which the shareholder holds shares to purchase for cash at their fair market value the shares owned by the shareholder which are dissenting shares as defined in subdivision (b). The fair market value shall be determined as of the day of, and immediately prior to, the first announcement of the terms of the proposed reorganization or short-form merger, excluding any appreciation or depreciation in consequence of the proposed reorganization or short-form merger, as adjusted for any stock split, reverse stock split, or share dividend that becomes effective thereafter.

(b) As used in this chapter, “dissenting shares” means shares to which all of the following apply:

(1) That were not, immediately prior to the reorganization or short-form merger, listed on any national securities exchange certified by the Commissioner of Corporations under subdivision (o) of Section 25100, and the notice of meeting of shareholders to act upon the reorganization summarizes this section and Sections 1301, 1302, 1303 and 1304; provided, however, that this provision does not apply to any shares with respect to which there exists any restriction on transfer imposed by the corporation or by any law or regulation; and provided, further, that this provision does not apply to any shares where the holder of those shares is required, by the terms of the reorganization or short-form merger, to accept for the shares anything except: (A) shares of any other corporation, which shares, at the time the reorganization or short-form merger is effective, are listed on any national securities exchange certified by the Commissioner of Corporations under subdivision (o) of Section 25100; (B) cash in lieu of fractional shares described in the foregoing subparagraph (A); or (C) any combination of the shares and cash in lieu of fractional shares described in the foregoing subparagraphs (A) and (B).

(2) That were outstanding on the date for the determination of shareholders entitled to vote on the reorganization and (A) were not voted in favor of the reorganization or, (B) if described in paragraph (1), were voted against the reorganization, or were held of record on the effective date of a short-form merger; provided, however, that subparagraph (A) rather than subparagraph (B) of this paragraph applies in any case where the approval required by Section 1201 is sought by written consent rather than at a meeting.

(3) That the dissenting shareholder has demanded that the corporation purchase at their fair market value, in accordance with Section 1301.

(4) That the dissenting shareholder has submitted for endorsement, in accordance with Section 1302.

(c) As used in this chapter, “dissenting shareholder” means the recordholder of dissenting shares and includes a transferee of record.

SEC. 2. Section 1301 of the Corporations Code is amended to read:

1301. (a) If, in the case of a reorganization, any shareholders of a corporation have a right under Section 1300, subject to compliance with paragraphs (3) and (4) of subdivision (b) thereof, to require the corporation to purchase their shares for cash, that corporation shall mail to each of those shareholders a notice of the approval of the reorganization by its outstanding shares (Section 152) within 10 days after the date of that approval, accompanied by a copy of Sections 1300, 1302, 1303, and 1304 and this section, a statement of the price determined by the corporation to represent the fair market value of the dissenting shares, and a brief description of the procedure to be followed if the shareholder desires to exercise the shareholder’s right under those sections. The statement of price constitutes an offer by the corporation to purchase at the price stated any dissenting shares as defined in subdivision (b) of Section 1300, unless they lose their status as dissenting shares under Section 1309.

(b) Any shareholder who has a right to require the corporation to purchase the shareholder’s shares for cash under Section 1300, subject to compliance with paragraphs (3) and (4) of subdivision (b) thereof, and who desires the corporation to purchase shares shall make written demand upon the corporation for the purchase of those shares and payment to the shareholder in cash of their fair market value. The demand is not effective for any purpose unless it is received by the corporation or any transfer agent thereof (1) in the case of shares described in subdivision (b) of Section 1300, not later than the date of the shareholders’ meeting to vote upon the reorganization, or (2) in any other case, within 30 days after the date on which the notice of the approval by the outstanding shares pursuant to subdivision (a) or the notice pursuant to subdivision (h) of Section 1110 was mailed to the shareholder.

(c) The demand shall state the number and class of the shares held of record by the shareholder which the shareholder demands that the corporation purchase and shall contain a statement of what the shareholder claims to be the fair market value of those shares as determined pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 1300. The statement of fair market value constitutes an offer by the shareholder to sell the shares at that price.

SEC. 3. Section 1302 of the Corporations Code is amended to read:

1302. Within 30 days after the date on which notice of the approval by the outstanding shares or the notice pursuant to subdivision (h) of Section 1110 was mailed to the shareholder, the shareholder shall submit to the corporation at its principal office or at the office of any transfer agent thereof, (a) if the shares are certificated securities, the shareholder’s certificates representing any shares which the shareholder demands that the corporation purchase, to be stamped or endorsed with a statement that the shares are dissenting shares or to be exchanged for certificates of appropriate denomination so stamped or endorsed or (b) if the shares are uncertificated securities, written notice of the number of shares which the shareholder

demands that the corporation purchase. Upon subsequent transfers of the dissenting shares on the books of the corporation, the new certificates, initial transaction statement, and other written statements issued therefor shall bear a like statement, together with the name of the original dissenting holder of the shares.

SEC. 4. Section 1304 of the Corporations Code is amended to read:

1304. (a) If the corporation denies that the shares are dissenting shares, or the corporation and the shareholder fail to agree upon the fair market value of the shares, then the shareholder demanding purchase of such shares as dissenting shares or any interested corporation, within six months after the date on which notice of the approval by the outstanding shares (Section 152) or notice pursuant to subdivision (h) of Section 1110 was mailed to the shareholder, but not thereafter, may file a complaint in the superior court of the proper county praying the court to determine whether the shares are dissenting shares or the fair market value of the dissenting shares or both or may intervene in any action pending on such a complaint.

(b) Two or more dissenting shareholders may join as plaintiffs or be joined as defendants in any such action and two or more such actions may be consolidated.

(c) On the trial of the action, the court shall determine the issues. If the status of the shares as dissenting shares is in issue, the court shall first determine that issue. If the fair market value of the dissenting shares is in issue, the court shall determine, or shall appoint one or more impartial appraisers to determine, the fair market value of the shares.

SEC. 5. Section 1309 of the Corporations Code is amended to read:

1309. Dissenting shares lose their status as dissenting shares and the holders thereof cease to be dissenting shareholders and cease to be entitled to require the corporation to purchase their shares upon the happening of any of the following:

(a) The corporation abandons the reorganization. Upon abandonment of the reorganization, the corporation shall pay on demand to any dissenting shareholder who has initiated proceedings in good faith under this chapter all necessary expenses incurred in such proceedings and reasonable attorneys' fees.

(b) The shares are transferred prior to their submission for endorsement in accordance with Section 1302 or are surrendered for conversion into shares of another class in accordance with the articles.

(c) The dissenting shareholder and the corporation do not agree upon the status of the shares as dissenting shares or upon the purchase price of the shares, and neither files a complaint or intervenes in a pending action as provided in Section 1304, within six months after the date on which notice of the approval by the outstanding shares or notice pursuant to subdivision (h) of Section 1110 was mailed to the shareholder.

(d) The dissenting shareholder, with the consent of the corporation, withdraws the shareholder's demand for purchase of the dissenting shares.

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